



OKINAWA



THE HISTORY OF AN ISLAND PEOPLE

by

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PART TWO: ISOLATION

for a little while pressure upon Okinawa was relaxed. It was a last, brief respite, destined to come to an end in 1609.

Throughout these troubled years the Shuri court continued to maintain the cycle of Confucian state rituals. A new form of evangelical Buddhism was introduced about 1603 and became popular in Shuri and Naha. A Japanese priest named Taichu preached that salvation was possible for all—even the poor and the illiterate—through the simple invocation of Amida Buddha's name. Taichu himself became interested in traditional Okinawan religious practices, preparing the first account of religion in Okinawa, under the title *Ryukyū Shinto-ki*. A number of new temples were established. The Okinawans as a whole continued to be tolerant of all organized religions, if not generally indifferent to them.

In 1606 the cultivation of the sweet potato was introduced from Fukien Province, followed soon thereafter by the introduction of sugarcane culture. These were events of revolutionary importance to the entire Okinawan economy, but a comment on the circumstances which attended these innovations may be left with advantage to a later page.

At Shuri the competition between "pro-Chinese" and "pro-Japanese" factions among the king's councilors became of grave importance, for it found expression in political conflict as well as cultural preferences. Men who had studied abroad formed a substantial element in the government—perhaps a majority in the policy-making levels of administration. Sho Nei's decision to refuse supplies demanded of him by Hideyoshi appears now to have been made largely on the advice of a senior councilor named Jana *Teido Oyakata*, a man of the Kume Village immigrant community who had been educated at Peking. It is recorded that Jana treated one of Satsuma's envoys in a rude and summary manner, and for this he was soon to pay with his life.

SATSUMA INVADES THE RYUKYU ISLANDS, 1609 (KEICHO 14)

Feudal lords and soldiers abroad at the time of Hideyoshi's death in 1598 hastened home to throw themselves into bitter succession dis-

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putes. These culminated in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600; Tokugawa Ieyasu and his adherents emerged victorious. In 1603 he assumed the title and office of Shogun and set about skillfully redistributing feudal territories. The barons who had supported him were styled *fudai daimyo* and were considered eligible for high office in the government seated at Edo (present-day Tokyo) in eastern Japan.

Barons who had opposed Ieyasu at Sekigahara were styled *tozama daimyo* (outside lords). Some were deprived of lands and honors; others were allowed to govern autonomously within their own domains, treated with punctilious respect but excluded from services in the Edo government. Ieyasu took pains to redistribute territory in a manner which separated the *tozama* daimyo from one another and from the capital.

In this manner the Satsuma clan was effectually isolated in southern Kyushu. Shimazu Yoshihiro had ranged himself against Ieyasu at Sekigahara; when the tide of battle turned in favor of the Tokugawa he hastened back to the clan headquarters at Kagoshima to await the effect this misjudgment might have upon Shimazu fortunes.

The Satsuma domain lay at a great distance from Edo. Ieyasu contented himself with ordering Yoshihiro to abdicate as clan chieftain and to assume the tonsure of a priest. His son Tadatsune succeeded him as daimyo in 1602, going up to Edo in the next year to pay his respects to the new shogun and to give thanks for Tokugawa leniency. Ieyasu was pleased by this act of submission. As a mark of honor he conferred one syllable of his own name upon Tadatsune, henceforth to be known as Iehisa, and confirmed him in Shimazu's hereditary titles. These included the title Lord of the Twelve Southern Islands, which had been granted first to a Shimazu in A.D. 1206.

We may assume that Satsuma-Ryukyu relations were discussed at this time, for shortly thereafter Iehisa sent an envoy to Shuri to recommend the king's submission to the new order in Japan and to advise Sho Nei to pay his respects promptly to the new shogun.

This the king declined to do; it is probable that he and his council did not fully appreciate the significance of Ieyasu's victory nor the fundamental changes which had taken place in the Japanese adminis-

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nawans were untrained and inexperienced. The last occasion for a general rally to arms and widespread fighting had been in the days of Sho Hashi, two centuries earlier; the arms themselves had been called in and put away during Sho Shin's reign; and there had been infrequent need to man the coastal defenses during pirate raids in the century thereafter.

The Okinawans were no match for the hardy Satsuma warriors. They fell away before the Japanese moving down to Naha. On April 5, 1609, the Japanese occupied Shuri Castle. The palace was looted and important treasure taken from the nearby temples and princely houses. Among these were the stores of irreplaceable Buddhist texts which had been sent down from Korea many years before.

These material losses seemed of small importance at the time, for with immense misgiving and alarm the Okinawans saw the king taken prisoner and removed to Kagoshima to answer for his defiant conduct. More than a hundred of his principal officers were made to accompany him.

The administration of the kingdom was put into the hands of a Satsuma samurai named Honda Chukamasa, who acted as deputy for Kabayama Hisataka. Soon fourteen high commissioners (*bugyo*) arrived from Kagoshima, accompanied by a staff of 168 men under orders to make the first complete survey of the administration and the economic potential of the Ryukyu kingdom, including, of course, the distant islands of Miyako and Yaeyama.

After checking, revising, and adjusting reports brought in from the off-lying islands, they decided that the Ryukyu revenues stood at the equivalent of 94,220 *koku* of rice (one modern *koku* is the equivalent of 5.11 bushels) and that upon this basis the Shuri government should be required to pay over to Satsuma an annual tribute of 11,935 *koku*, or about one-eighth of the total revenues of the kingdom. In addition to this, the king was expected to pay over to Shimazu an annual tribute of approximately 8,000 *koku* from his private income. The foreign trade was to be monopolized by Satsuma and directed wholly to its interests.

This was a disastrous blow to the economy. In addition, the islands of the Amami group, Yoron, Tokun, and Kikai, lying between Okinawa and Kyushu, were removed altogether from Shuri's control and attached

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tration. Shuri's reply to Satsuma referred to conditions in Japan as they had been before 1600, not as they were in fact thereafter.

Shimazu appealed for permission to chastise the Okinawans for their rude want of respect. On June 17, 1606, Ieyasu granted this request.

It is probable that the new Tokugawa government was glad to find military diversion for the frustrated men of Satsuma, and at no cost to the shogunate. The Satsuma warriors—a truculent lot by nature—were hemmed in on the north; there could be no expansion on Kyushu, no raids on neighboring feudatories, no entertaining forays across the borders of Satsuma, Osumi, and Hyuga as there had been for centuries past. Shimazu's relations with all other daimyo were under close Tokugawa surveillance.

A Satsuma expedition to the south would relieve discontent; Shimazu was ready to return his samurai to their proper employment after three years of enforced tranquillity, and he was certainly not unmindful of the wealth in trading goods and opportunities which would be his at Okinawa. Ieyasu on his part was at this time deeply concerned with problems of European pressure upon Japan. He mistrusted Spain and feared Spain's activities based upon the Philippines. It would be greatly to Japan's interest to extend garrison forces into these islands through which the Europeans must pass to approach the shogun's port at Nagasaki. With Satsuma's forces, these southern islands could be transformed; steppingstones from the south could become a barrier on the southern sea frontier.

In February, 1609, Satsuma moved against Okinawa. A force three-thousand strong set sail from Yamakawa in Kagoshima Bay under the command of Kabayama Hisataka, whose family thenceforth were to have a close relationship with the southern islands for three hundred years.⁴

A fleet of more than one hundred war-junks moved down through the Amami Islands, past Tokun-jima and Kikai. There were several fierce skirmishes along the way, and when the samurai landed at Unten Harbor on Motobu Peninsula, they met a brief but stiff resistance, with considerable losses on both sides.

Shuri made a desperate effort to organize a defense, but the Oki-

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